



# The Wonders of Chios Artifactory (Greece)

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# The Wonders of Chios



*The content of the ibook was prepared  
by Dorothea Papathanasiou-Zuhrt*

Mastic and excellent seafaring are what Chios, the fifth biggest island of Greece, is known for. Both its location, the superb seafaring skills of the inhabitants since ancient times and the valuable mastic attracted many conquerors in the course of history. The mastic tree grows all over the Mediterranean. However, only the special variety in Chios (*Pistacia lentiscus* var. *chia*) is the one that is producing the natural resin called mastic and its heavenly byproducts. Due to the climatic conditions this variety grows only in the southern part of the island! The skills of the mastic growers and the traditional production led the Chian mastic to the Unesco intangible cultural heritage list. Our story takes us to the Middle Ages, where we witness the glory of Byzance, the wars of Venice and Genova, the Renaissance, the Black Death in Europe and the discovery of America by Christopher Colombo, all these connected to Chios! Live the wonders of Chios and get to know the protagonists: listen to the gossip in the Emperor's Palace and become an eyewitness of the secret plans of La Superba; visit the mastic growers in the fields; become a captain and bring Chian mastic, wine and alum to Henry VIII of England and the King of France; fight with the Varanguian Guard in Constantinople and against the Mongols in Caffa and save your life from the Black Death. Beware of the crooks: you accept only golden florins as a currency. **The wonders of Chios are waiting for you!**



# Chios (Greece)

Seaward Castle

Nea Moni

Chios Mastic Museum

Pyrgi

Mesta





# 1 The Golden Seal, 1042

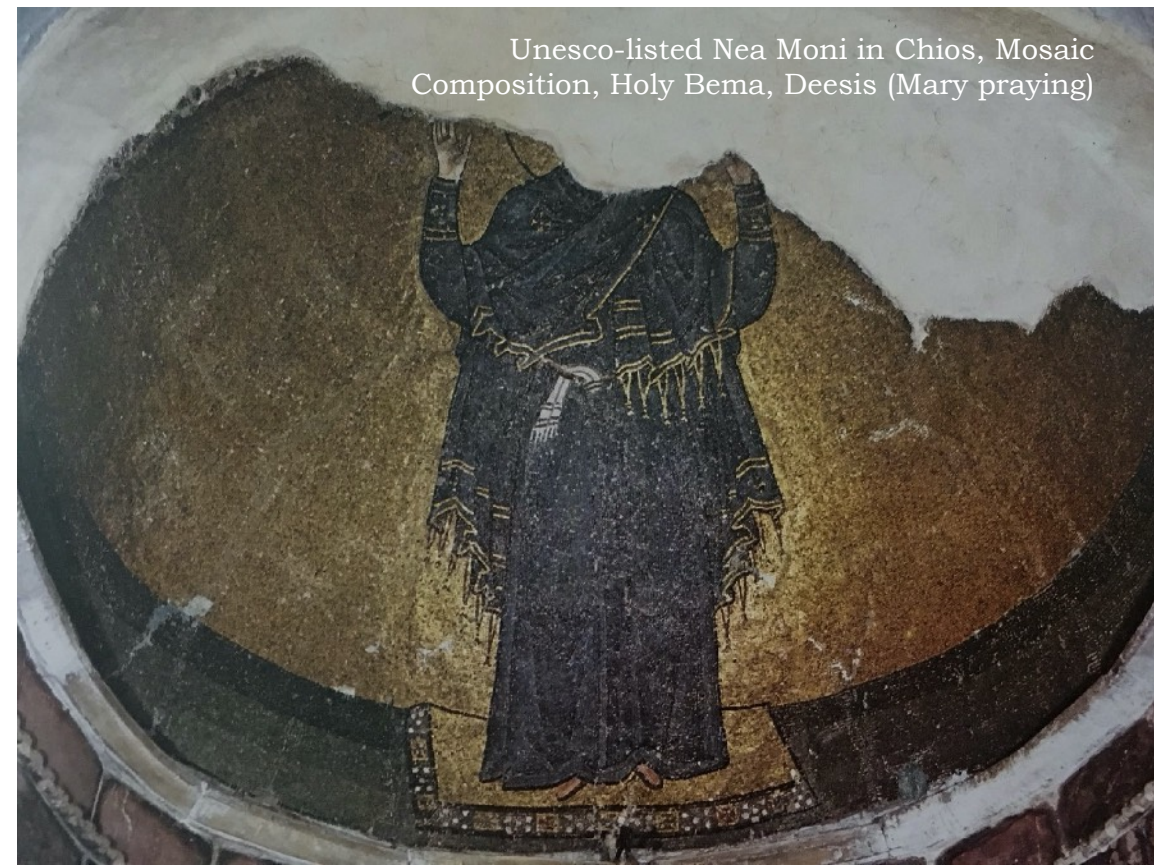


## Introduction

Located in the center of a large court, the monastery is the gem of the architectural ensemble. It belongs to the most distinctive examples of Byzantine architecture. It has been built by masters of the imperial school of art in Constantinople during the ages of mightiness and prosperity. It has always provided shelter to people from all over the known world. But especially during the Genoese dominion (1346-1566) the monastery received visitors and travelers, who were greatly attracted to this aesthetical miracle; to pilgrims and faithful, who came to worship Virgin Mary. Still today it attracts significant visitor flows from all over the world. They come to enjoy a masterpiece, representative of the 11th century Byzantine Art, an art which introduces to motion. Many alterations that the Monastery has suffered through the ages have concealed its original image, so that its tangible structure has not reached our days intact. However, Nea Moni is a heritage symbol and a landmark connected to national struggles for freedom, connected to the island's dramatic fate.



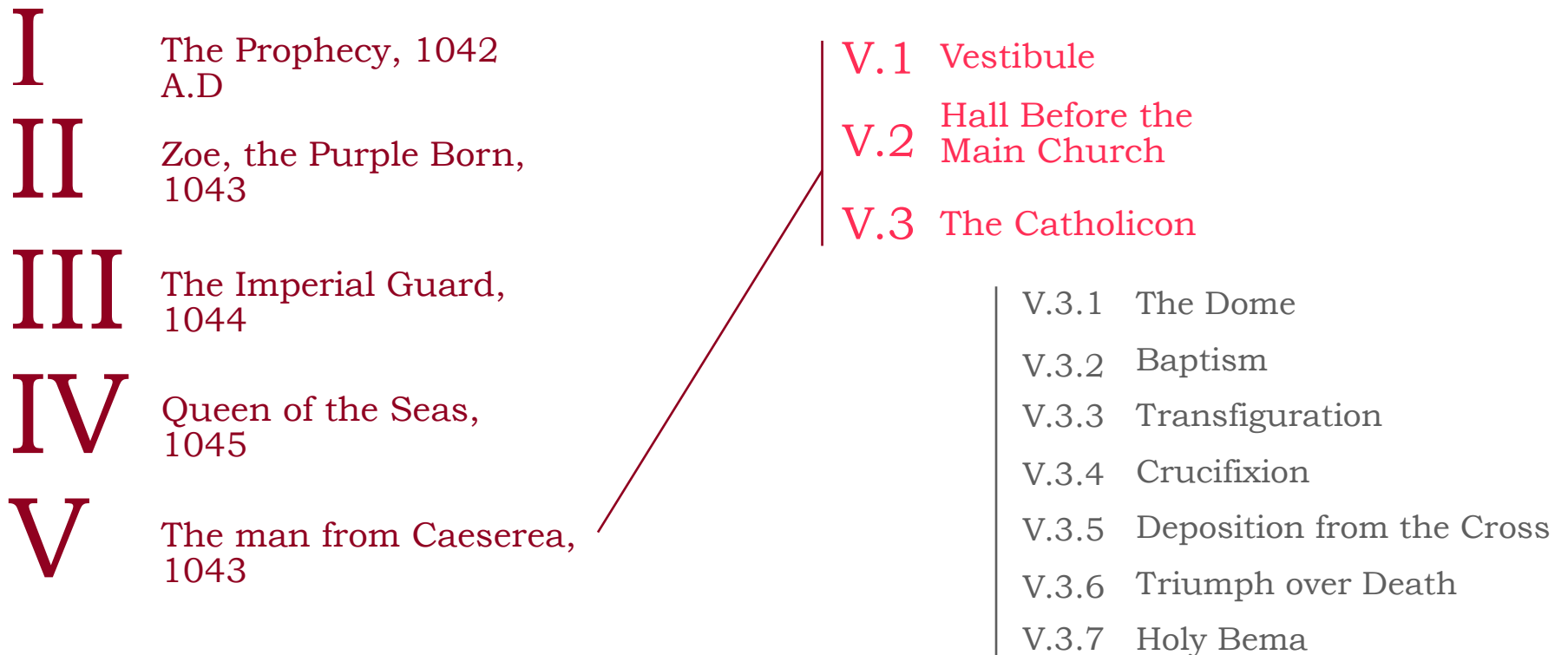
[Watch in full screen](#)



Unesco-listed Nea Moni in Chios, Mosaic Composition, Holy Bema, Deesis (Mary praying)



# The Golden Seal, Anno Domini 1042





## I. The Prophecy, 1042 A.D.

With this order you need immediately to dispatch a messenger to the island of Chios with the news to general Zyvov. He shall leave with the first available ship from the Queen City to bring the news to Chios. He shall not use a commercial ship, because I am in a hurry, but should embark a quick sailing dromon, which has 100 oars and 200 oarsmen in service. Also the messenger shall be very skilled in military matters and armed to the teeth. He will carry namely an official decree, which I have signed with my name in the imperial red ink and stamped with the imperial golden seal. The message is this: I have decided to found a Monastery in honor of Maria, the mother of our Saviour, in the island of Chios.

The messenger needs to meet also three holy men, who prophesied, to me, while I was in exile in the nearby island of Mytilene, that I would ascend the throne. These pious brothers have asked me to build a Monastery, should the prophecy be fulfilled. Now I am committed to fulfill my part of the promise to the monks, Nikitas, John and Joseph. As for expenses, do not worry because gold is flowing from the public treasury, like a stream slushing up from bounteous springs. Thus I will grant it income from public funds, the produce of estates and even the proceeds of direct taxation.

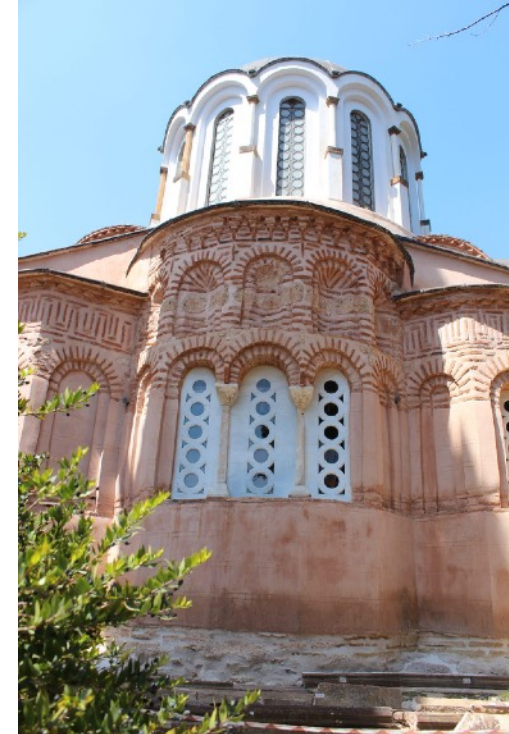
The Imperial Treasury shall exclude the Monastery from all taxes, I specifically underline this. The State Treasury shall pay for materials and highly skilled architects and masters of the mosaics and other knowledgeable artisans from the Imperial Workshops and have them sent to Chios to build the Monastery.

This it is my wish and order with God's grace.

*Constantine IX, Emperor of the Romans, Constantinople, in the year of the Lord 1042.*

The unique  
octagonal dome

Unesco  
designation



## II. Zoe, the Purple Born, 1043

The imperial dispatcher has just brought the order of our Emperor. According to this I need to send armed men to the island of Chios to bring the news about the founding of a Monastery! And so, it will be. Chios is one of the important islands of our Empire, lying between Constantinople and Alexandria. This is very convenient for the commercial ships and the dromons, our military ships.

But I can't help to confine to you, that I have heard some rumors in the Imperial Court: that an imposter monk was sent to Mytilene to our Emperor, then in exile from the Court, to predict his ascend to the throne. Now it seems that the Emperor has decided to handsomely support this Monastery, which is not yet built. I was ordered to exclude it from taxation, also from important taxes like the food and animal taxes, the taxes for the shipbuilding and the roads and the military expenses, the donations to the tax collectors, house taxes and commercial taxes of any kind and all of the duties that are imposed to the populace. My secret thought is this: the money for the soldiers and the revenues devoted to the army quite unnecessarily will be diverted and put aside for other uses...

But from the other side, there is enough money for now. It is a common secret that Emperor Basil II, God bless his soul, left the biggest treasury ever existed on earth. Imagine, that the

Emperor Basil II Crossing  
the Imperial Gate,  
Skylitzes Manuscript  
"Synopsis of History"  
Biblioteca Nacional de  
España, Madrid



Aghia Sofia, South  
Gallery Mosaics,  
Emperor Constantine IX  
Monomachus and  
Empress Zoe

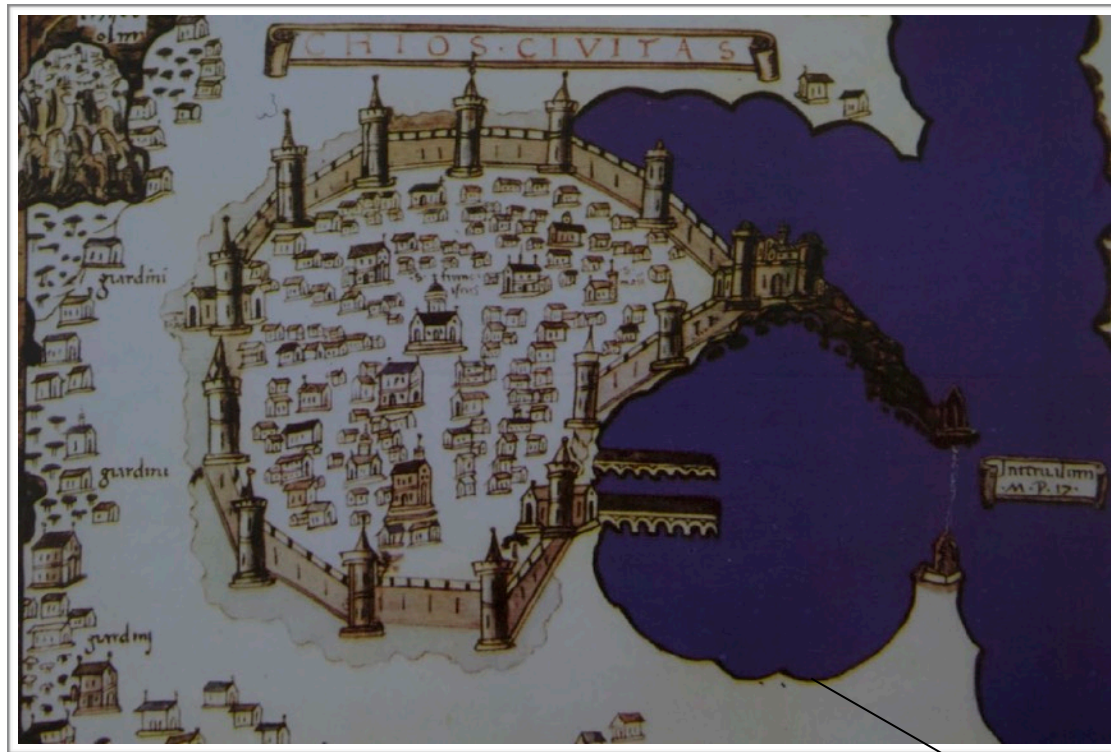


Crown of Constantine IX  
Monomachus sent to King  
Andrew of Hungary.  
Budapest Archaeological  
Museum. Depicted are  
Constantine Monomachus,  
Co-Emperor with Empress  
Zoe and Theodora of the  
Macedonian Dynasty and  
two dancing girls.





Imperial Treasury could not accommodate all the gold collected, and it was necessary to dig tunnels in the earth to keep it! He spent his life on a horse fighting, eating the same food as soldiers did. He married no one but his Empire. Imagine, with his Solidarity Law in the year of the Lord 1002, he obliged the nobility to pay the taxes of the small farmers, who were not able to pay for themselves. And he saved all the money from the foreigner vassals directly into the Treasury. That is why we enjoy today this prosperity. His niece, Empress Zoe, was a purple born princess. You see she was born when her father, Emperor Constantine VIII, was reigning together with his brother Emperor Basil II, who was seldom in the city and was happy to leave all of this to his brother while he was with the army in the field. Zoe lived unmarried for 47 years in the palace. When her uncle died, her father ruled for three years on his own. Alas, he had no sons to succeed him and this changed the fate of Zoe, who married already twice before she wed Emperor Constantine Monomachus. She is 64 years old and he is just 42! Despite her



age she is still stunningly beautiful, her golden hair complement a complexion white as marble. Maybe her beauty is helped by her knowledge in cosmetics and chemistry and she keeps a laboratory in the Sacred Palace for this reason. Despite being the Empress, she never challenges her people with extravagances and useless spending of money. Thus, long live the Emperor and the Empress for many years to come!

*Andronikos, Grand Treasurer of the Emperor of the Romans Constantine IX Monomachus*

Map of Chios by Cristoforo Buondelmonti, 1422. British Museum

### III. The Imperial Guard, 1044

We were marching from the Palace to the port, when we saw the Emperor and his escort riding out of the Palace. It was a marvel of beauty that Mother Nature gifted on this man, so justly proportioned, that there is no one in our time to compare with him. To this symmetry nature added a robust vigor, as though she were laying firm foundations for a beautiful house. His head she made ruddy as the sun and his skin was of the purest white all over, with exquisite accuracy. It was Emperor Basil II the Macedon, who established us Varangs from the Nordic lands as his personal guard. Emperor Constantine Monomachus continues this tradition. Last year he defeated the Russians, who attacked Constantinople with 10.000 men. Their ships were burned and the remains of their army fled to Varna, where they were caught by us. In the end they signed a new peace treaty. They call themselves Christians because their sovereign Vladimir was baptized and married the sister of Emperor Basil II, God bless his soul, but they have an eye on our wealth and lands. We are surrounded by enemies and the only way to keep them where they are, is our powerful army and the navy.

Thus, I don't believe those rumors that our Emperor Constantine, lives with his mistress live without any prudence.

- Byzantine Varangian Guard by History Channel



[Watch in full screen](#)





Empress Zoë, already wife of two Emperors before her marriage to Constantine, is the purple-born daughter of Constantine XIII, who was co-Emperor with his brother Basil II. The Empress has golden hair, and her whole body was radiant with the whiteness of her skin. There are few signs of age in her; in fact, if you marked well the perfect harmony of her limbs, not knowing who she was, you would have said that here is a young woman, for no part of her skin was wrinkled, but all sooth and taunt, with not furrows anywhere.

*Thormod, Imperial Guard of the Varangs*



Marble Slab with 4 B insignia, Seaward Walls of Constantinople. Istanbul Archeological Museum. The 4 B derive their meaning from the Greek "Βασιλεύς Βασιλέων Βασιλεύει Βασιλεύουσαν". The Emperor of Emperors is reigning in the Imperial City". The 4 B with a Cross belong to the standard Byzantine insignia and flags as the two-headed eagle, which is deriving from the Roman military tradition.



Emperor Constantine IX Monomachus (1042-1055)  
and Empress Zoe (10042-1050. Aghia Sofia  
Mosaics, Southern Gallery.

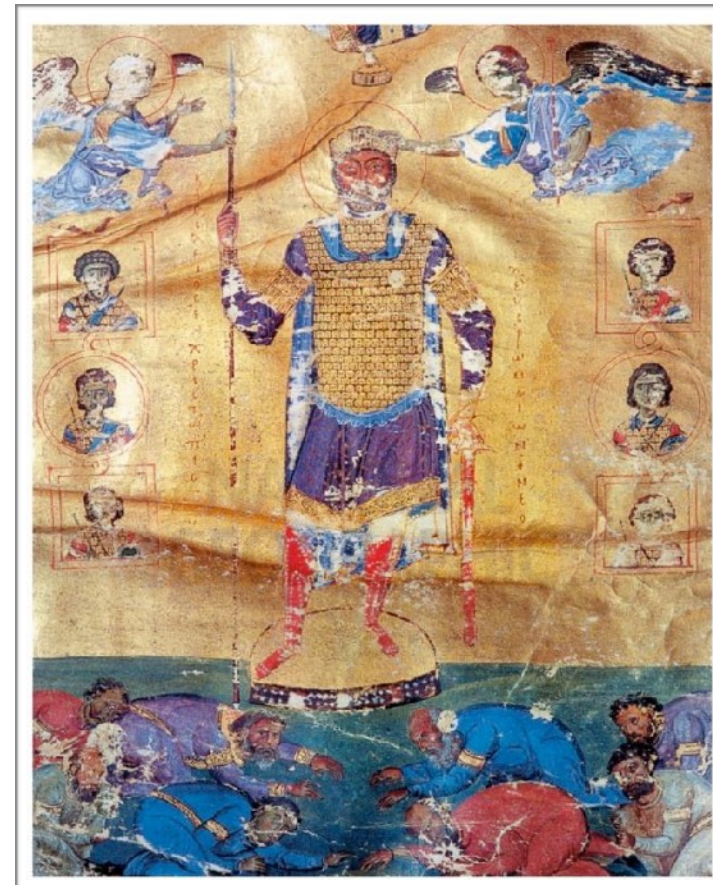




## IV. Queen of the Seas, 1045

My mission is to execute the imperial order and sail to Chios, which lies precisely in the middle of our Empire: half way from the Queen City and half way from Alexandria to the south. Through its position Chios is connecting the Black Sea with the Mediterranean Sea. After the seaward castle and the new harbor were built, many noblemen and officials from the Queen City moved to Chios, homeland to many unique and expensive merchandise and monopolies: besides the cultivation of mastic, wine, cloths also husbandry, the famous Chian sheep, the naval affairs flourished. Much is heard about the Chian bankers, who practice advanced banking in the Forum exchanging all kinds of currency they know of. Because this is known: they are needed to send all those expensive products to the whole world. Indeed, the Chians are famous mariners and bankers. They exchange and put into circulation new coins. They receive money payable in Constantinople, Smyrna, Phocaea and elsewhere, for which they have issued letters of credit repaid by their representatives there. To clear the mutual accounts, bankers go to a certain city at regular intervals and include their receivables and debts. With these credit mechanisms they secure the movement of capital without the use of money. They accept interest-free deposits and interest-bearing deposits. They make payments for their clients' accounts and transfers from one account to another, that is, they use bank checks. Thus, gladly I execute the Emperor's order and sail to Chios, - and who knows, maybe I find my match there. It's high time I started to think about marriage.

*Nikephoros, Master of the Imperial Equerry*



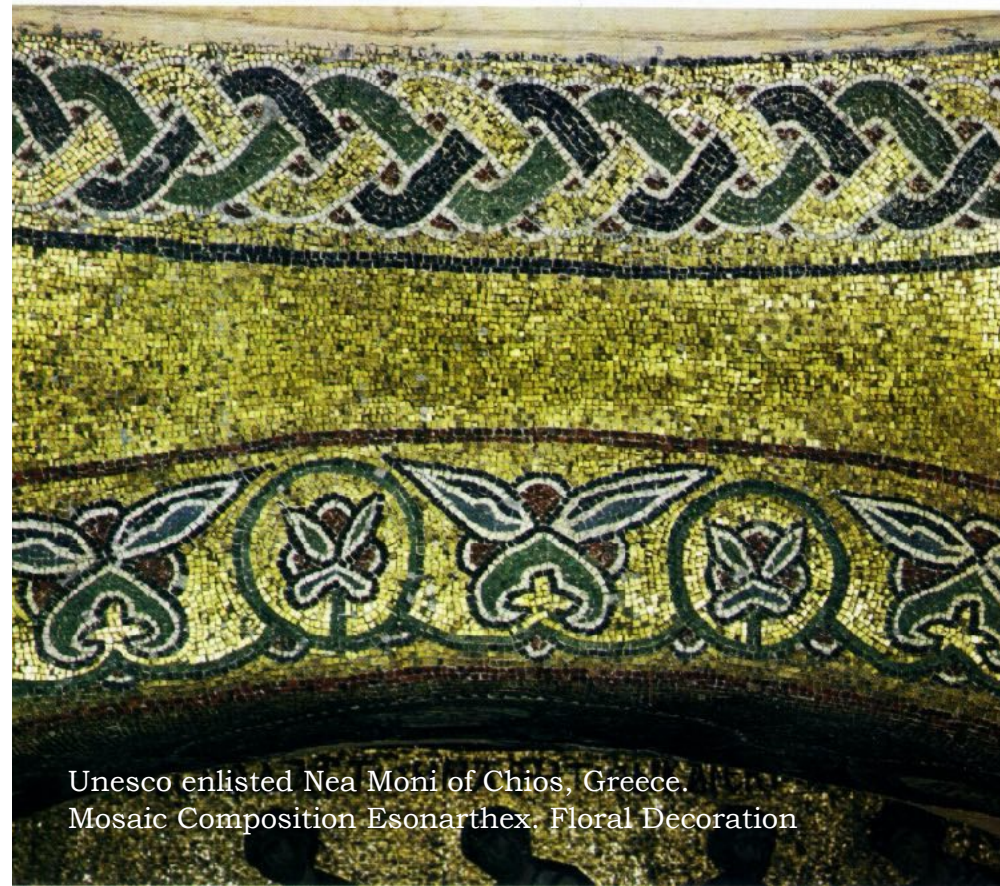
Byzantine Emperor Basil II Macedon,  
Marciana Library, Venice



## V. The man from Caesarea, 1043

My family was rooted in Caesarea, the birthplace of St Basil, who set the rules for the monks, God bless his soul. I am of humble origin; my ancestors are peasants. But I am blessed with artistic skills. A man of letters saw my drawing in the stable and persuaded my father to send me to a local workshop in a close by monastery to learn to draw and paint. My poor father, he was exhausted with taxes and having so many mouths to feed, he rejoiced at the prospect of having me sent to the monks to follow a pious way and fill my belly. How lucky I was! I learnt to write and read besides painting and drawing. But mostly I excelled in inlaying the small stones for the mosaics in the churches and the yards of the wealthy. Despite being young in years my compositions acquired me fame and I was great in demand by the local aristocracy. I could help my old father to catch a breadth and my sisters to marry. Until one day a noble duke, who came from Constantinople to meet the local governor got to know my artworks in the monastery. So impressed was the noble man, that wished to take me, a novice in the arts, with him to the Imperial Workshop in the Eternal City. My mother shed many tears before my departure, but I got drunk by this dream and was willing to take the challenge.

When I arrived in Constantinople, they put me as an apprentice in the Imperial Workshop, where I realized that I did not know as much as I thought I did. I was assigned to a Master of the mosaics as his apprentice and worked hard day and night to learn the illustrious art well because there were many suitors for the



Unesco enlisted Nea Moni of Chios, Greece.  
Mosaic Composition Esonarthex. Floral Decoration



apprentice's post and only the finest men were kept at the Imperial Workshop. Some years after my Master was sent to supervise the mosaic works for St. George of Manganas. It was a personal request of Emperor Constantine IX, that only the best of the best were to work in that church. And what the masters made there was incomparable and beyond the language of the mortals and whereas heaven itself is gilded with stars only at intervals, there gold was spread continuously over the whole surface, as if flowing from its center from a bounteous spring. After this marvel was completed, the Emperor Constantine founded the Monastery of Nea Moni in 1042 and the artists of the Imperial Workshop, arrived in Chios, summoned to repeat the great task as it was the Emperor's will. We will not chisel our names on the art works, as it is God that is guiding our hands to glorify his wisdom. We will not be remembered for the deeds of our mortal lives. But our masterpieces will stand for the centuries to come narrating the glory of the Empire. The art of mosaics will withstand any changes and fortunes: as they are made in the fire, they are destined for the eternity. But let me be your guide and start with the prophecy:

Three monks, Nikitas, John and Joseph, who lived then at a place near by the future monastery, saw every night from their cells light emerging out of a myrsina tree. One night they felt that they had to follow the sign and solve the mystery. They walked in the darkness towards the light, where suddenly

they looked with amazement at an icon shimmering through the branches of the myrsina tree. It was an icon of Virgin Mary with her arms wide open, but void of young Jesus... The monks took the precious icon to the mountain of Provatas, where they lived. Soon enough they decided to build a small chapel at the place where the icon was found. That small chapel has evolved to the masterpiece that lies in front of your eyes today. After a while the monks thought that the small chapel was not enough to shelter such a miraculously discovered icon. The Lord's angel guided our monks to General Constantine Monomachus in the island of Lesbos, not far from Chios. They predicted to him, that he was meant to climb to the throne real soon. Deeply moved, the future Emperor promised, that if their prophecy comes true, he would grant them anything they wished for.

Truly enough, two years later in 1042, Constantine Monomachus acceded to the throne. In Constantinople, the three monks reminded the Emperor of his promise. The Emperor willingly issued a decree sealed by his golden seal, which builds the Monastery, but also grants it many privileges. He even ordered his best architects and artists to travel to Chios to supervise the construction works. The construction lasted for twelve years. However, Emperor Constantine IX never lived to see its full glory, he died before the works were completed.

# V.1

## Vestibule (Exonarthex)

You are now at the place where the mortal remains of the Monastery's founders used to be kept. It is a simple rectangular space divided in equal parts, decorated with small arches and pillars. This is the space used for ritual washings. The southern wall of the exonarthex was decorated with inscriptions and portraits of the founders.

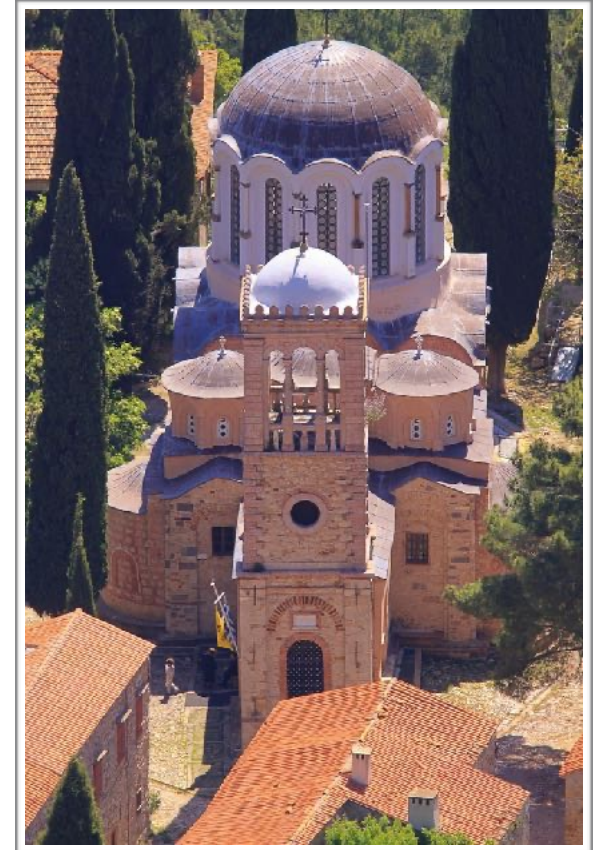
Unesco-listed Nea Moni in Chios,  
Exonarthex and Esonarthex  
(Entrance Spaces)



Unesco-listed Nea Moni in Chios,  
Mosaic Composition, Esonarthex,  
Niptiras (Ritual Washing)



Unesco-listed Nea Moni in  
Chios, Church Bell





## V.2

### Hall Before the Main Church (Esonarthex)

A few steps further you may enter the room that used to receive pilgrims, visitors and the faithful. Here is your first example of the quality of the Imperial Workshop: Mary, the Mother of God. We never let Virgin Mary alone. When her son is absent, she appears with the Saints. They show her admiration and respect and are there to protect her.

Observe now the scene of the ritual washing, the Niptiras. Christ is preparing himself for the ritual. He is then washing tenderly the feet of his followers. Many people agree that this act of humility is an attitude to show respect for others, respect for life.



Unesco-listed Nea Moni in Chios,  
Esonarthex. Mosaic Composition,  
Betrayal.



V: The man from Caesarea, 1043

V.2: Hall Before the Main Church (Esonarthex)



Nea Moni in Chios, Esonarthex, Mosaic  
Composition, Betrayal



## V.3 The Catholicon







To stand up to foot traffic, floor mosaics were made of the most durable materials.

## The art of Mosaics



Watch in full screen



## History of the Mosaics

Watch in full screen





### The Dome

Emperor Constantine gave us his permission to build as we thought best. We could choose a pattern from any church in Constantinople, apart from the one of Saint Sophia, the most famous Church in all Christianity. The Church of Saint Apostles and St. George of Mangana set the pattern to build Nea Moni. The architects, who have recently built this miracle of Church, St. George of Mangana, came together with their crew directly from Constantinople to Chios. We all settled in a place nearby, where we built a village, to be close to the construction site. The architects had to make sure that the dome was well supported. That is why they designed an octagonal cupola. I am proud to say that the combination of marbles, small and large pillars, multiple arches and mosaics testimony the skills of artists only the Imperial Workshop in Constantinople can train.

#### V.3.1

Turn a circle around yourself to find out that the Church is divided in eight equal parts, building an octagon on a square basis. Have you noticed that the two preceding entrances are dark rooms? On the contrary the light of the sun shines through all nine windows of the dome. You may ask yourself: why is this so? The illumination of the space in the heart of the main church is not just an architectural necessity that provides for light. The illumination of the main church is also a symbol of our faith: the space where the faithful at last unite with God is 'enlightened', while the rest of this world is a dark and painful space.



Unesco-listed Nea Moni in Chios, Catholicon (Main Church).  
Interior View of the Octagonal Dome.



## Baptism

Christ is being baptized and his “godfather” is St. John, the Baptist. Jesus’ Godfather is also called Saint John, the Forerunner, because he was the first man on Earth to preach, that the Messiah has at last come to this world. Christ’s Godfather appears in our scene symbolically taller, larger, and more impressive than the other characters. His dress testifies his quality as prophet and as the most important figure in the scene besides Jesus. A dove is flying towards Jesus’ head accompanied by a shaft of light. At his right two angels richly dressed attend the ceremony. They look like guests invited by the hosts. The boy, which sheds the water out of the pot in the river, represents River Jordan. Can you guess what roles do other characters play?

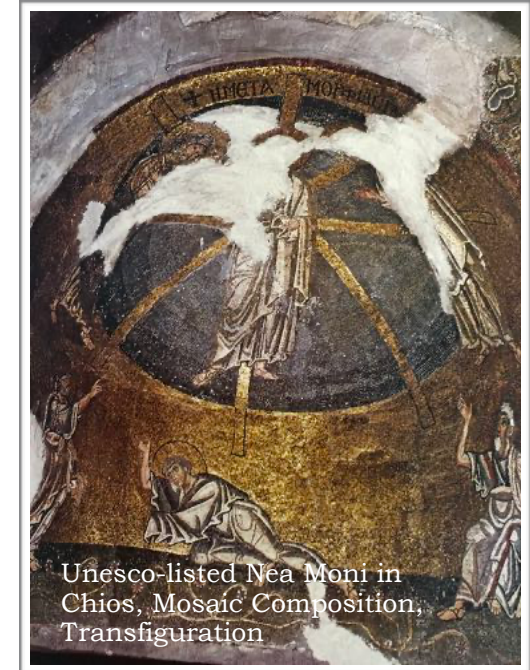
V.3.2



## Transfiguration

The blue background you are looking at dominates the picture. The blue background that surrounds the image of Jesus has a very special meaning: it stands for his divine quality. Therefore, it is called “the glory”. Jesus, dressed in white, impresses, as you see, the persons in the scene, through the revelation of his divine quality. The Apostles Peter, John and Jakob as well as the prophets Eliah and Moses, look at Jesus with admiration, almost wonder-struck! Jesus was very fond of John, we all know that. That is why I chose John to be closer to Jesus than the other characters. John bends with wonderment in front of Jesus, rising his hand to him. This is the first time I depict John make a clear move towards Jesus. I have tried to establish a special visible link between John and Jesus. I hope you can see this.

V.3.3





## Crucifixion

Although the face of Jesus is missing from the scene, you can still feel the sorrow and the pain. Mary stands on her feet, mourning. Just look at Mary's hands: they are crossed on her chest. She must feel helpless, unable to react, devastated... Her sisters, Mary Magdalene and Mary Clopa, are there to support her. They show deep compassion, but are they able to console Mary? Take a closer look at Mary Magdalene. Her hands are covered in her dress. This is a symbol for mourning, as we mourn in our days.

V.3.4 John, of whom Jesus was so fond of, stands there unshaved. John wants us to know, how endlessly abandoned he feels without Jesus. John is the youngest Apostle; therefore, he usually appears without a beard.

The crown is the aura of the holy persons. To represent the simple folk, I chose to depict a soldier in the scene, who also mourns the death of Jesus. I have also included high ranking followers of Jesus in the scene, as we know that Jesus had followers also among them.

## Deposition from the Cross

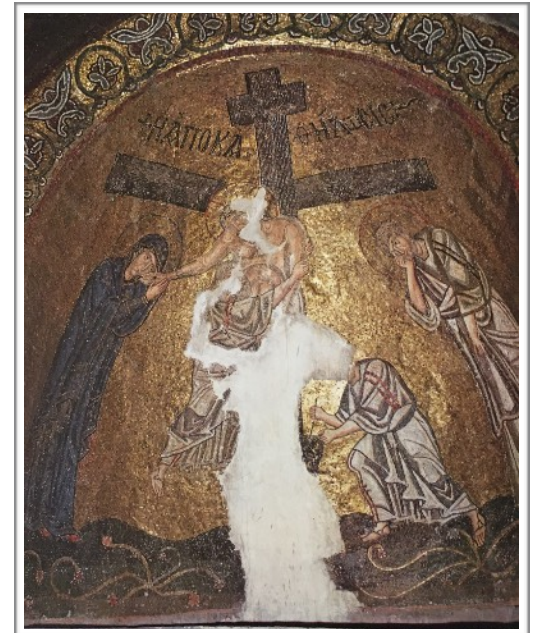
V.3.5 Mary holds Jesus' hand kissing it. A mother takes farewell from her only son, who died in martyrdom. Is it possible to describe the grief, the sorrow, the pain? Here is John again. If you observe him carefully you will see John stands unchanged as in the previous scene. John, a duplicate of his self? The truth is painful. John is still, exactly because his senses are still, the time has stopped for him. So great is his sorrow.

There is a very active person in the scene. You can't see what he is doing, but I can tell you: he is removing the nails from Christ's feet. Have you heard of him before? His name is Nicodemus and is one of those who helped bury Christ's body.



Unesco-listed Nea Moni in Chios,  
Mosaic Composition, Crucifixion

Nea Moni in Chios, Mosaic  
Composition, Deposition from the  
Cross.





### Triumph over Death

No doubt that I am a religious person. My talents shall glorify our Lord and Christianity. But I am also a proud citizen of Constantinople, the eternal city, the richest city ever, the impregnable city. Thus, the figure of the Emperor is central to my composition. A large, magnificent figure, whose dresses vividly move in the centre of the picture. He holds a double cross, which is the symbol of triumph. Do you recognize now the Emperor over Life and Death?

V.3.6

Although my Master of the Mosaics taught me to depict our Lord, Jesus Christ, only frontally, I took the liberty to let Jesus bless the virtuous people saved by him with a gracious movement. This is my legacy for the future generations.



Unesco-listed Nea Moni in Chios, Mosaic Composition, Descend to Hades, Detail with dignitaries



Unesco-listed Nea Moni in Chios, Mosaic Composition, Descend to Hades, Detail with Christ



Unesco-listed Nea Moni in Chios, Mosaic Composition, Descend to Hades



**Holy Bema**

V.3.7

Mary rarely appears without her baby. But look, here is Mary alone. She stands on her feet, her arms are wide open. What is she doing? She intervenes here to God for forgiveness. She implores God to forgive the whole world. Not very close and not so far from Mary you may see two beautiful young men. They protect her Ladyship, the Mother of God. You may ask yourself “when was that”, “for how long will they protect her”. The answer is simple. They will protect her for ever. Space and dates are not important in the art of our Empire, for the Empire was, is and will always be. It is an Empire with ecumenical character. It is an art for the eternity.



Unesco-listed Nea Moni in Chios, Mosaic Composition, Holy Bema, Deesis (Mary praying)



2 Shareholders,  
1346



## The Flight of the Griffin, 1261

In 1265 in the city of Acre in Palestine, a war breaks out between Genoese on one side, Venetians and Pisans on the other. Two years later Genoa loses the base for its businesses. Then it began negotiations with Emperor Michael Paleologo, who aimed to restore the Roman Empire in its true seat, Constantinople. Genoa sends ambassadors to the Emperor and signs a beneficial treaty of alliance: Genoa offers his military and naval collaboration to recapture Constantinople, while Emperor Michael Paleologo promises in exchange for his Ligurian allies the district occupied by the Venetians in the capital, the possession of Smyrna and the passage through the straits towards the Black Sea.

In July 1261, before the arrival of the Genoese ships, Michael Paleologo recaptured Constantinople but kept his commitments towards the Genoese. The treaty opens a new episode of their expansion in the East: in 1267 they settle in Pera and create new colonies in Crimea, at the mouth of the Danube and the Don, controlling the Black Sea. From there they traded with the Mongols or almost a century. However, in 1346 the Mongols besiege Caffa, their main colony in the Black Sea. It is the start of the Black Death in Europe.



Christoforo de Grassi, View of Genova and its fleet (1597, copy of 1481), Galata Museo del Mare, Genoa.

The Triumph of Death. Pieter Bruegel, 1562. Museo del Prado, Madrid







The city of Genoa in a woodcut from the Nuremberg Chronicle, an illustrated, non hand-written encyclopedia by Hartmann Schedel, 1493. The Light House (Lanterna) can be seen in the left edge of the picture. It is published in 1493 by Anton Koberger in Latin and German. There exist different copies scattered in museum. The original (Handexemplar) by Hartmann Schedel is guarded at the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, München.



Galata, Ottoman Miniatur by Matrakci Nasuh, 16th century. XVI. yüzyılda Galata'yı gösteren bir minyatür (Matrakçı Nasuh, Beyân-ı Menâzil-i Sefer-i Irâkeyn, IÜ Ktp., TY, nr. 5964, vr. 9a)



## THE SHAREHOLDERS, 1346

2.1: For a mess of pottage, Nymphaio 1261



Tale of the Birth Right (Old Testament)



## 2.1 For a mess of pottage, Nymphaio 1261

Once when Jacob was cooking lentils, Esau came in from the field, and he was exhausted. And Esau said to Jacob, "Let me eat some of that red stew, for I am exhausted". Jacob answered: "Sell me your birthright first." Esau said, "I am about to die of hunger! Of what use is a birthright to me now, give me to eat please." But Jacob insisted: "Swear to me now." So Esau swore to Jacob and sold his birthright. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew. He ate and drank but when he rose and went his way his birthright was gone for good.

*Genesis 25:29-34*

Being an eyewitness of all the events, I decided to write down my account how we tried to recapture the Queen City from the Latins, who reside it for 57 years now, destroying it every day a bit more. Because we will be judged for our actions when the time comes and because it is important to inform the successors to live prudently and learn from the mistakes of the past and not allow themselves to plunge in a sea of extortions and lies, as we did also paying for the mistakes of others.

It was the lack of naval forces that dictated to address the Genoese, exactly because they were the arch-rival of the Venetians and already engaged in a war with them. On March 13, 1261, we signed a trade and defense agreement with them, whereby Genoa agreed to ally with my nephew, Michael Palaeologus and Emperor of the Romans in the event of war and to provide a fleet of up to fifty ships during the projected siege of Constantinople, while sixteen ships were to be immediately provided. In addition, the treaty stipulated the permission for horses and weapons to be purchased by us from the Genoese territories, and for Genoese subjects to enter Nicaean service. In exchange, the Genoese would receive tax and custom concessions throughout our lands, including their



Emperor Michal Palaeologos has recaptured Constantinople from the Latins in 1261.  
Manuscript of Pachymeres' *Historia*, 14th century. Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München



own trading quarter in Pera, on the coast of the Golden Horn opposite Constantinople, as well as other ports within the lands of the Empire.

Michael had to guarantee their protection and that he will not allow anyone in the Empire to take arms against them and will expel any pirate from its state and punish anyone who does something wrong against them. He ratified all the rights and privileges which the Genoese enjoyed in Constantinople before the Crusaders conquered the City and if with God's help he were to recapture the City, he will give them the palaces they had before the impious conquest and the church of St. Mary with the commercial galleries and cemetery and the plot where now the Venetians built fortress as long as Genoa immediately sends navy aid to the empire with numerous galleys and men. But as the fate of our Empire laid in our hands, we had to make more concessions. And Michael with a heavy heart decided to grant them the city of Smyrna with ownership and jurisdiction and its port and whatever belongs to it for eternal use with the exception of the privileges and rights of the Orthodox diocese of the city and the possessions of the nobles. He also decided to donate annually to Genoa 500 golden coins and when he sent me to Genoa to ratify the Treaty with those crusader-merchants, he sent two gold-plated fabrics to the Archbishopric of Genoa and gold-plated fabrics for the bishop and in the memory of the former Emperor Manuel. And I know very well that Michael was not willing to concede to them all those privileges, but they knew well that we were in an

urge to move and they have literally extorted the conditions reminding Michael I about the treaty they have signed with Emperor Manuel Komnenos in 1155.

And Michael heavily agreed that he will not impede Genoese ships to export from the empire any commodities of feed or grain, nor impose any customs duties, unless one is a debtor or guilty of a crime. In this case he will be sent to Genoa to be tried by the courts there. He will not impose any taxes or other payment or benefit rights on the empire or in the countries which he might re-capture, but only those that were already agreed with Emperor Manuel in 1155 and that he will not allow other Latins to trade in the Black Sea except for the Genoese. He finally promised to release all those Genoese who had been convicted of crimes and were held in the Empire's



Fresco of Joshua from Unesco-listed St. Lucas Monastery, Boeotia, Greece, 13th century. Unusually for a saint, Joshua is depicted wearing headgear, helmet and a straight sword.



prisons and to allow them to return to their homeland.

All of the above he had sworn with an oath and ratified for himself and his successors. For their part, the Genoese promised that by signing this treaty, lasting peace between the Genoese and the Emperor and his successors will prevail. They promised to protect the interests and rights that the emperor's envoys and his subjects wanted to gain in Genoa and that the merchants of the Empire would enjoy freedom and would be able to export weapons and horses from Genoa free of duty or other taxes and would further enjoy all the protection that is appropriate to the traders, to the shipwrecked or to the individual persons. And that Genoa would not allow a fleet army to be equipped in Genoa to invade any part of the Empire. All Genoese are free to serve the Emperor by providing galleys of weapons and horses. The Genoese who reside in the Empire are obliged to defend it but cannot be prevented or have their goods confiscated, if they desire to leave. If a Genoese commander and his ship is located in any port if the Empire is invited by the imperial commander to send men and food to an enemy-threatened fortress and to provide protection as long as it is needed, he has to do so, otherwise he would be punished by Genoa itself like as if he would be traitor of his own fatherland.

The Emperor's envoys will be able to export weapons and horses from Genoa and the surrounding areas without paying customs duties if the Emperor needs galleys. Genoa will send from one to 50 galleys to be paid by the Emperor. The

maintenance costs will be paid by the Emperor as well. The Genoese traders will be able to export from the state all his goods freely, but gold and silver without the Emperor's permission. The merchandise brought by Greek merchants from the empire or goods of other nations must be deposited in special warehouses and its origin should be examined, so to define which merchandise is subjected to taxes and which is not.

The Treaty has been signed in Nicaea in the palace of the Palaiologoi on the 13th of March 1261. On the 28th of April the Treaty has been ratified by the Emperor and was sealed by his imperial golden stamp, the Bulla d'Oro in front of the notary Giacomo Mazucchi. The ratification by the Republic of Genoa has taken place on the 10th of June 1261. After the ratification of the Treaty by the Republic of Genoa, a flotilla of 10 galleys and another 6 ships has been gathered under the command of Martino Boccanigra to sail to the Emperor and help him recapture the city. Just a month later, it was God's will that Michael succeeded to recapture the Queen of Cities without the help of the Genoese, but to whom now he and his successors were eternally bound by that Treaty. And despite the victory he felt like Esau who sold his birthright for a lentil stew...

*Isaakios Doukas, advisor and emissary of the Emperor of the Romans Michael Palaeologus*

The Cross of San Giorgio, Genoa





Shareholders, 1346

If anyone knows the story, how La Superba, the Republic of Genova had to turn over the island of Chios to the ship-owners, then it is me. I was a banker by trade before my accession to the office of the Doge. And one thing I knew very well: how to make and secure money. My first task as Doge was successful: I managed to pacify the Republic that was torn apart by the conflicts of the nobility. Where there is anything to split, there is always a conflict. In this particular case the Grimaldi clan tried to seize the City, but under the command of Admiral Vignoso and his galley fleet they did not stand a chance. The public debt of the Republic to the ship owners this expedition has reached 250.000 lire. However the money to pay back Vignoso and the ship-owners was not collected on time. Thus two options were available: not to pay at all and confront another revolt, or to entrust the Admiral with a valuable possession for a mutual benefit, the most important island of the Aegean Archipelago: the island of Chios, that connects us



Watch in full screen



Italian Bankers, miniature from a Medieval manuscript. London, British Library



with our colony in Caffa on the Black Sea shore. Actually one does not have to be a banker to understand the perspective. Not only is this island the ideal destination for anchoring the ship between Constantinople and Alexandria, but is also located opposite of Phocaea, where we possess the alum mines granted to the Republic by the Imperial Decree of 1261 by the Emperor of the Romans Michael Palaiologos. Currently the island is under the Roman rule, but they have a weak navy and thus I am not so much concerned with them. You see mastic from Chios and alum from Phocaea are one of the most expensive products in the global trade. And these monopolies shall belong to us. Because we are the only ones capable to clean the Aegean Sea from piracy and enemies.

For a capable Admiral as Vignoso is, it could not have been that difficult to reconquer Phocaea, and indeed the man did so. But the favor is not for free. So have suggested to compensate the cost of the expedition by entrusting those 29 investors to govern Chios under the Roman flag and a Genoese government.

Since I know myself we are competing with the Venetians for the control of the trading routes in the Levant and in the Black Sea. Since the partition of the Roman Empire of the East, for which Venice was the sole responsible, the Venetians have a firm hold in the Mediterranean. In the West they hold Corfu and the east Negroponte and Candia. Given this situation our Republic needs to ensure a secure trading post along the route to Constantinople. This chance was offered to us in 1346 with island of Scio and its famous mastic monopoly, and the nearby port of Phocaea, the port for

«BUONDELMONTI, Cristoforo, Liber Insularum Archipelagi [1420]» στο Τόπος και Εικόνα, χαρακτηριστικά ξένων περιηγητών για την Ελλάδα, από σπάνια βιβλία της Γενναδείου Βιβλιοθήκης, Μουσείου Μπενάκη, Ιδιωτικών Συλλογών, τ. Ι, Αθήνα, Ολκός, 1978, page 66





the best quality alum mineral on the Asian mainland. As I said, because the finances of the Republic were in very poor health, some rich traders were asked for loans to be repaid after the completion of the expedition. By granting to these traders under admiral Vignoso the revenues of Scio and Phocaea, we enabled them to directly manage the exploitation of the two territories for an initial period of 29 years. The traders founded a company by the name, Albergho degli Giustiniani, by now known as Maona Giustiniani and later on obtained an extension of the initial lease. I am very proud of this company as it revolutionized banking, for which we are famous for. The company is based on actions, leading to the first stock exchange ever. Twelve patricians decided to reinforce the company by adopting the joint name "Giustiniani". Each of the twelve partners has the own allocation of responsibility: equal was the fortune invested and equal are their benefits and titles. Each title can pass from one shareholder to another, by selling their company shares. We have not regretted the decision. The island is famous for its scenery and good climate. Its chief export is mastic, a gum that exudes from the bark of a tree grown in the southern part of the island. And not to forget that Scio lies opposite of Phocaea, where our monopoly of alum is secured, and half way between Constantinople and Alexandria. That is another reason Chios is important, not only to us, but also to those sharks the Venetians, from whom we must protect ourselves.

*Giovanni di Murta, Doge of the Republic of Genova*



Quinten Massys, Tax Collectors, late 1520s, oil on panel, 86 x 71 cm. Liechtenstein Collection, Vaduz/Vienna (artwork in the public domain)  
[side-by-side viewer]



Manuscript map  
of Chios by  
Cristoforo  
Buondelmonte,  
1422. Copy from  
the British  
Museum (source:  
Argenti  
Collection, Chios  
Library "Korais")



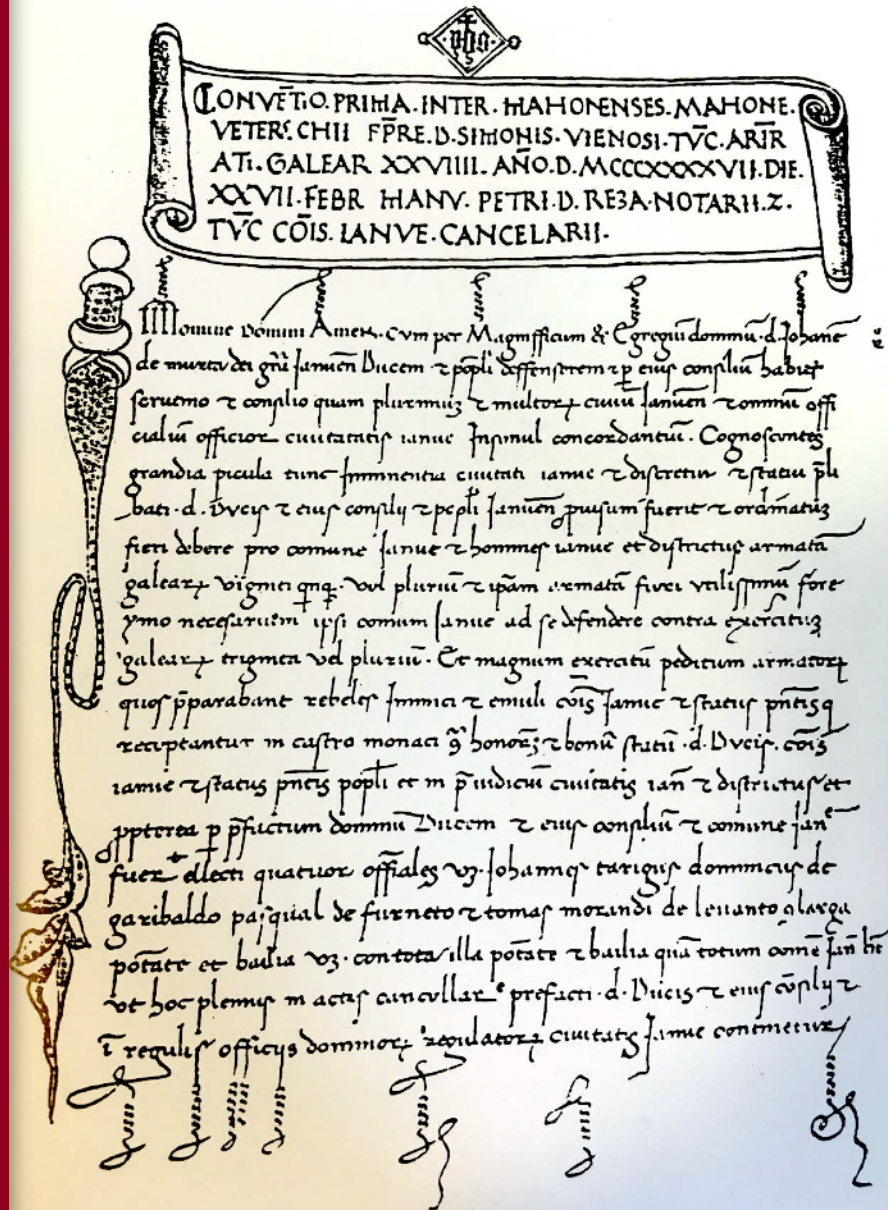
The Romanesque style tower was built as Christea Turris ("Tower of Christ") in 1348 during an expansion of the Genoese colony in Constantinople. Galata Tower was the tallest building in Istanbul at 219.5 ft (66.9 m) when it was built in 1348.[3] It was built to replace the old Tower of Galata, an original Byzantine tower named Megalos Pyrgos ("Great Tower") which controlled the northern end of the massive sea chain that closed the entrance to the Golden Horn. That tower was on a different site and was largely destroyed in 1203, during the Fourth Crusade of 1202–1204. The Map Created in 1422 by Cristoforo Buondelmonti, this is the oldest surviving map of Constantinople.





Codex Berianus Chiensis. Primo accordo tra la Repubblica Genovese e la Maona del 26 febbraio 1347 firmato da Simone Vignoso. Riporta norme e privilegi del governo dei Mercanti (Maona) nell'Isola di Chio

Codex Berianus Chiensis, fol. VII.



The Money Changer and His Wife (1514) Oil on panel, 71 × 68 cm Musée du Louvre, Paris



## 2.3 Maona di Scio, 1346

Seaward Castle of Chios





## 2.4: The Brand, 1364

When La Superba, the Republic of Genoa, called us to help re-establish the order, 29 noble citizens offered their help. The plan of the Doge was one of mutual interest, and cunning, as only a banker can make up one. It practically meant to collect all the proceeds from Chios and Phocaea and control the Aegean Sea. And the Aegean is the priceless maritime corridor that allows us to control the merchant route from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean. After we have cleared all money issues among the 29 nobles, 12 of us set up a company and established ourselves in Chios. From there we can control the commerce and our business in person. Not that we intend to lose contact with La Superba, it's our country after all. Chios is an investment and its shall be dealt with as such.

The circumstances were very favorable in 1346. The Roman Emperor in Constantinople is disputed by another one who was crowned Emperor in Adrianople, very convenient the civil war for our case. I devised a plan to cover my intentions: I sent three galleys over there with a message for the local nobility that Umberto of France intends to conquest the island, because he needs it as a base for his struggle against the Turks. I asked them to allow me take over the military command until this danger is blown away, but they replied that they can defend themselves. In June I reached Chios with my fleet and I have sent ambassadors requesting to anchor my ships in the harbor and prepare for a



SeaWard Castle of Chios. Porta Maggiore (Main Entrance) with Southeast Bastion



Southwest Bastion with walled  
Giustiniani Coats of Arms



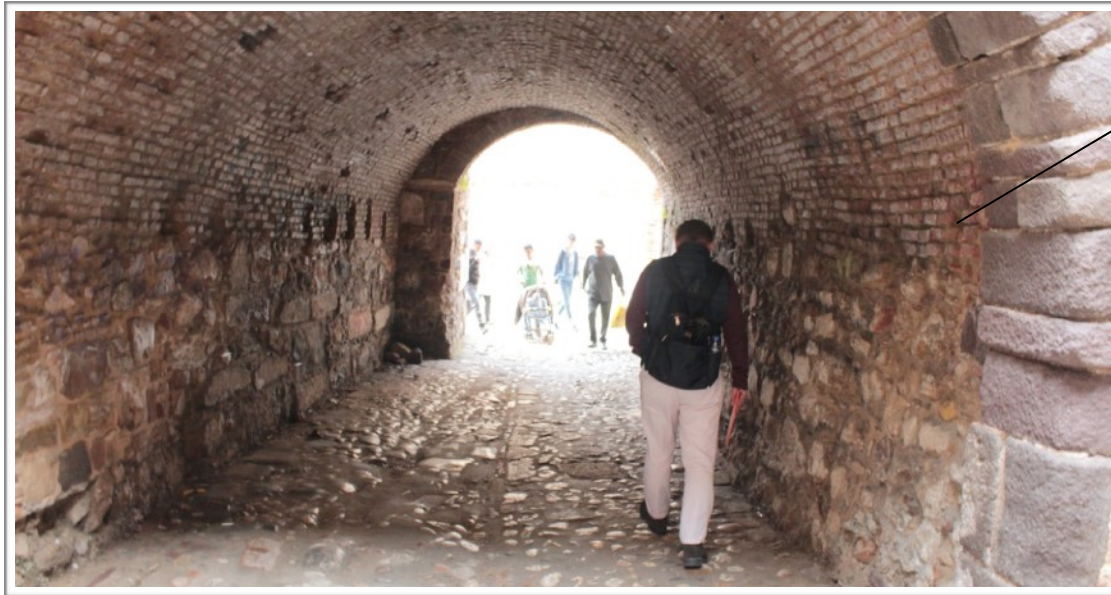
siege in the case Umberto appears. But instead to discuss the matter, they attacked us. Then I have laid siege on the island for three months. Hunger and thirst led the local nobility to surrender the island. The treaty has been signed in the Church of St. Nicholas in September 1346 and we promised not to touch the privileges of the nobility. On the 20th of September, Phocaea with its lands and its alum mines is surrendered to us. With Chios and Phocaea in our hands and with the port of Smyrna in Christian hands a new era is on the march.

Forneto, Oliverio, Arangio, Recanelli, Banca, Longo, Garibaldi, Negri, da Canetto, Adorno and Campai shared received 1000 shares of Maona, the new company, each one. The seat of the company was in the Castle of Chios and I have been selected as general manager of the company until the public debt of the Republic is paid to us.

*Simone Vignoso Admiral of the Fleet, 1346*







Arcade, View from the Entrance

Arcade, View from the Castle



St. George of the Castle (main church of the walled city)







Seaward Castle of Chios.  
Giustiniani Palace and Dungeon.  
View from the Main Entrance



Seaward Castle of Chios.  
Giustiniani Palace, Seat of the  
Genoese Administration. View from  
the Main Entrance



Seaward Castle of Chios.  
Byzantine Cistern.



Seaward Castle of Chios. Gunpowder Magazine  
under restoration.



Giustiniani Palace, in Chios. Seat of the Genoese  
Administration. Garden Detail.





Seaward Castle of Chios, Central Square



Coats of Arms of the Genoese Maona Shareholders in Chios, St. George of the Castle



Seaward Castle of Chios, St. Nicholas of The Mole, Chios. At this location was signed between the Simone Vignoso and the local aristocracy the treaty the surrendered the island to the Republic of Genova in 1346.

Coats of Arms of the Genoese Maona Shareholders in Chios



Salvago



Negri  
(Ἐσχηματισμὸν ὄσων albergo)



Olivieri



Castelli



Campi  
(Καμπόων)



Paterio



Pagano



Franghi

Οἰκίσματα Μαντζώνων



3 Guarded  
Secret, 1430

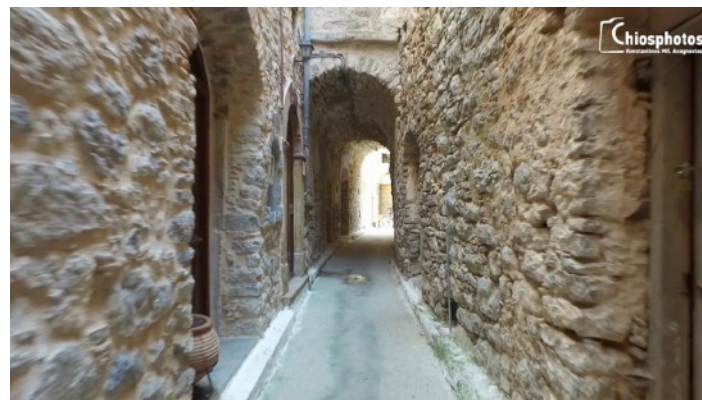
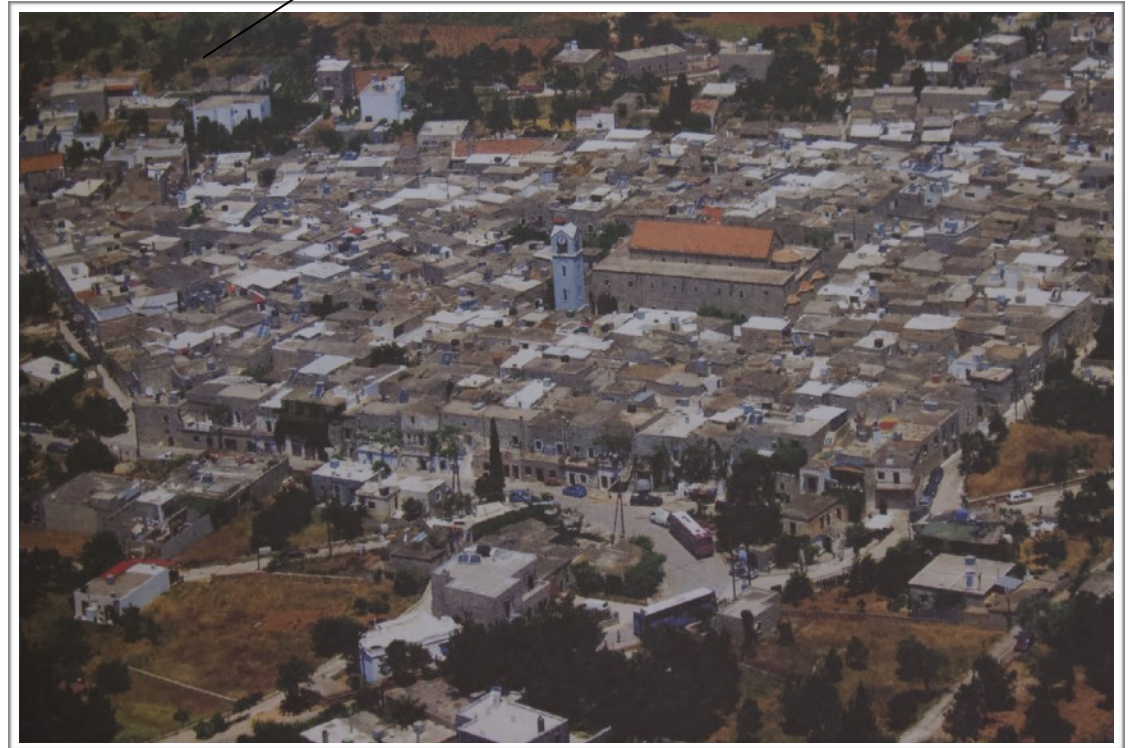


### 3.1 The wealth of Chios, 1430

To avoid any unnecessary riots, our company the Mahona has lifted some burdens from the farmers. So, to allow them to breathe a bit, and ensure the production, which is of course strictly controlled. Each village assumes responsibility for the cultivation of an assigned number of mastic trees, so they must produce a specific quantity of mastic each year. And in the case they produce more, we buy the surplus, but if the produce is less, the growers have to pay the double price for the lacking quantity to compensate us and cover for our profit loss. The whole production process is supervised by our officials. We decide how many mastic trees will be cultivated, when and how the recollection of the mastic will take place. Only mastic growers and the supervisors are engaged in cultivation. We are selling the final product, but not the secrets of cultivation.

*Andrea Loredan, Mastic Supervisor of Mastic Cultivations of La Superba in Chios*

Medieval Mastic Village of Mesta, fortified settlement with main Church, former Tower of the Milites (Military Watch Tower)



[Watch in full screen](#)

- Medieval Mastic Village of Mesta, Chios by K. Anagnostou



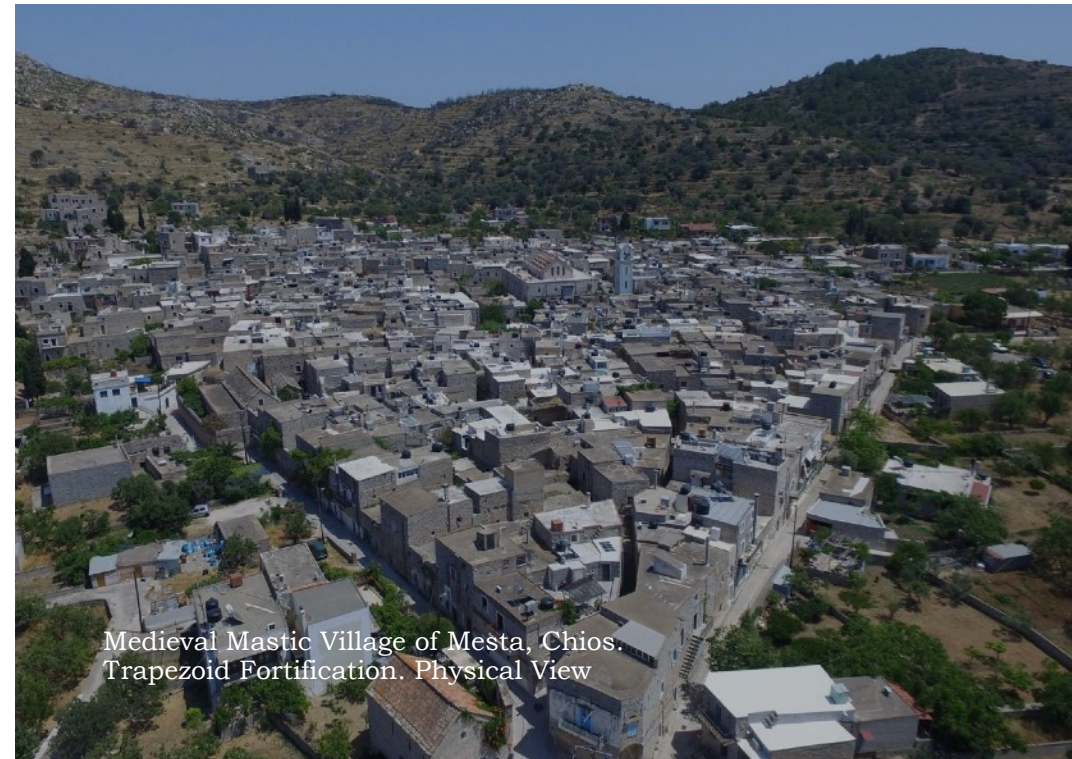
## 3.2 Testimony, 1475

When the Genoese Lords set up, their company, Maona, to govern the island and all of its proceeds, they counted and expropriated each mastic tree. Then a central plan was devised by them in Genoa to exploit our labor at the fullest. While we lived in harmony with our neighbors in the land, they ordered us to move to new villages that look like fortresses, because as they say, it is their “duty” to protect us from piracy and other enemies that wish to get hold of the precious mastic. And so the villages were covered by walls, nobody stays unnoticed, when he comes in and gets out and after dark, nobody gets out or gets in, as the gates close. Small paths run through the village, which they call “streets” but actually is a never-ending labyrinth. One central and four corner towers watch over our life every single minute. The Genoese Lords have brought their architects to Chios to designed houses for us and protect us from the pirates and the Turks. In the beginning we all rejoiced, thinking to have great masters who care for the people. But then, we understood that their “care” was profit-oriented. The houses they have designed for us are all locked within the fortified village and its tiny alleys. They look like dungeons, even if some of us are accommodated in two-store buildings. The huge central tower is full of armed men, ready to apply “order”. They watch every move we make and pay attention to the contraband of mastic, the punishments of which are unspeakable. In my village, Mesta, the central tower is the tallest from all

Mastic Cultivation  
and Production



Watch in  
full  
screen



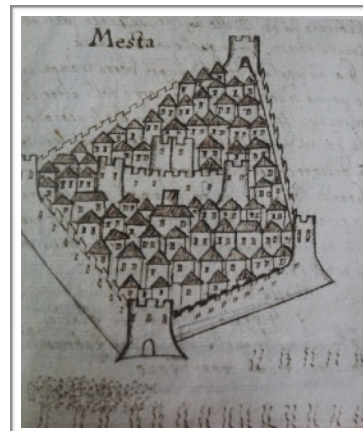


the 21 mastic villages, - may be because we are close to the port... And do not even think to keep one drop of the precious mastic, let alone to smuggle it. Because, before you lose your life, you can lose an ear or a nose, or be branded on the forehead.

If you think that it is easy to grow the mastic tree you are mistaken. First, don't forget that these trees are low and this means you spend your life bending. I can tell you all about this, as I have spent my whole life as a mastic grower. And before me, my father and before him my grandfather, and before him, my great-grand father did so. We don't know anything else, but our village and the taxes. And don't you think we can keep the produce for using it at home. It's a luxury product, Sir! It is destined for the King of France, the King of England and the Sultan of Egypt. It is not for the taste of a humble farmer.

But because it is a medicine, I keep in secrecy some drops that I have not delivered to the Official of the Weighing Station. Just for my children, if they fall ill. Nobody knows about it, as the punishment is horrible. You can lose an ear for possessing it and if you sell it you lose your nose. And then they hang you.

We can consider ourselves lucky if the pirates don't come to raid the lands, and if the Venetians are not in war with the



Medieval Mastic Village of Mesta, Chios. Fortified Settlement, Francisco Lupazzulo, 1639

Medieval Mastic Village of Mesta, Chios. Interior Architecture of the Fortified Settlement.



Medieval Mastic Village of Mesta, Chios. Colorful Alleys



Genoese and if the Emperor in Constantinople favors on ally, then the other is attacking us, and this can be just anyone with a galley fleet.

But Lord Benedetto Zaccaria, God bless his soul, taught us how to improve the produce from the mastic tree and vine cultivation and this made our life easier. His son, named after his father, has inherited also the virtues of the late Lord. He issued a decree, two hundred years ago, that farmers are not allowed to be sold as part of the land, as it used to be before him. Alas, the new Genoese Lords are not interested in our prosperity as the Zaccaria family used to be. These were the glorious years of the Roman Emperors from Constantinople. What we hear about the Romans are stories fading away with each generation. Stories that tell how we were the masters in our own lands...

*Ioannis, Mastic Grower from Mesta*

Medieval Mastic Village of Mesta, Chios. Main Church of Mesta, Great Taxiarchis built on the former Tower of the Milites



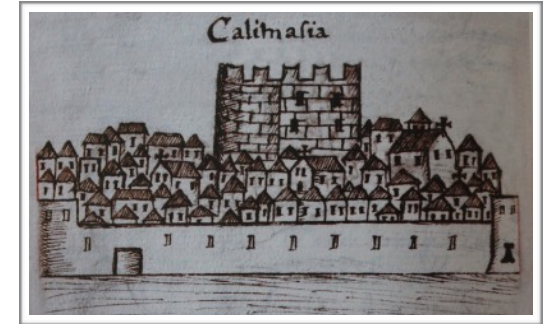
Medieval Mastic Village of Mesta, Chios. Central Square





### 3.3 The Tower, 1520

I am a masticarius, a mastic grower. My father was one before me and before him his father and so on. We don't know anything else. Before the new masters arrived here 56 years ago-, those who call themselves Giustiniani I mean, we lived in peace with each other and our former rulers the Zaccaria, god bless their souls, did a lot for us. We possessed one third of the land we cultivated and our community decided the important issues. Nowadays we are all subjected to the authority of the mighty governor, the Podesta. We the farmers cultivate the mastic trees, but we see no good from it. Because the monopoly belongs to the Maona, the commercial company of the Giustiniani. We are not allowed to use even a small branch from a mastic tree from the fields we cultivate, and if we did they'd punish as common criminals. We are not even allowed to stay close to a mastic tree, if we did not engage to work with it. Nobody is allowed to sell mastic, or to hide it, or to keep it for personal use, even the smallest quantity. And if some mastic growers do not reach a certain quantity in a season, then they are punished to pay the cost of the produce that is lacking in a double price. These masters supervise the whole production and set the quantity to be delivered to them. And nobody can escape. Here in Mesta, we have the tallest tower of all 21 mastic growers' villages in Chios erected in the middle of the village. This is so, they say, because we are in a walking distance



Medieval Mastic Village of Calimasia, Chios. Fortified Settlement, Francisco Lupazzulo, 1639



Medieval Mastic Village of Catharacti, Chios. Fortified Settlement, Francisco Lupazzulo, 1639

Medieval Mastic Village of Nenita, Chios. Fortified Settlement, Francisco Lupazzulo, 1639



• Port of Mesta by K. Anagnostou



[Watch in full screen](#)



from the port, which attracts the pirates and they wish to protect us. But my father tells me that they have forced six villages to evacuate in order to put all the population under control in one village, ours is one of them, Mesta. They made the people of another six villages to leave their homes and put them to live and work in a new one, Olympoi, which they also designed to their liking. The bigger villages like Nenita and Kalamoti are turned into fortifications. In Kalamoti lives permanently a strong force of soldiers, to watch over the south part of our land. This year, Master Niccolo Banca completed the Castle in Armolia: it is huge with two lines for the defense, two towers and 62 wards for the soldiers. We live in a little space, with narrow streets and little sun. I am happy to work on the field, despite the hard work and the fear that I might collect less mastic than the year before. I am happy because I can breathe fresh air, feel the sun, even if I risk a sun stroke, and see the horizon. There is nothing else I have seen in my life. I wished I could become a sailor and see the world. But we are not allowed to leave the fields. Because the Giustiniani Lordship earns 30.000 golden coins a year from the trade of mastic. We work and they profit. It's as simple as that.

*Demetrius from Mesta*

Ducat of the Maona di Chio. Filippo Maria Visconti. Duca di Milano, 1421-1436. Uncertain mint. From the Joseph R. Lasser Collection



The Tower



4 Monopoly,  
1304-1566



## Mastiha, the unique

Of all the exotic, aromatic spices in the world, none is quite like Chios Mastiha, the resinous, crystal granules that come from splicing open a particular tree, at specific times of the year and letting its sap flow like slow-motion tears to the ground, to be collected, sorted, cleaned, and sold the world over. The Island of Chios is home to mastiha, also known as mastic, and this rare and difficult to cultivate, comes from mastiha trees. Chios Mastiha is one of the oldest spices known to the Mediterranean.



- Cultural Heritage Foundation of the Bank of Piraeus. Mastic Museum in Chios, Greece: Cultivation, Production, Cultural History



Watch in  
full screen



PIOP Mastic Museum Facade by PIOP



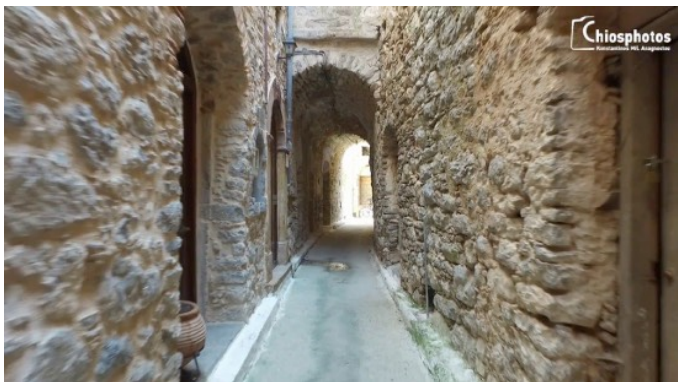
PIOP Mastic Museum Facade by PIOP



- Medieval Mastic Village of Olympoi. Model at the PIOP Mastic Museum, Chios, Greece



- Chios Mastic Villages by K. Anagnostou



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full  
screen

- Chios Mastic Museum by K. Anagnostou



Watch in  
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screen

- Medieval Mastic Village of Olympoi



Watch in  
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screen

- Medieval Mastic Village of Armolia by K. Anagnostou



Watch in  
full  
screen

- Medieval Mastic Village of Patrika by K. Anagnostou



Watch in  
full  
screen



## 4.1 A well thought plan, 1360

In the 26th of August 1360 as shareholder of the Maona, I signed with Giovanni de Setta a to sell him 30 staters of mastic for three years. He will sell it in Cyprus which is part of the trading area. When the three years passed, I then signed another contract with him for another 13 years, according to which he could sell mastic to whom he pleased and that each year he would buy 60 staters additionally. He can pay in three rates annually in Cyprus, and each stater costs 900 golden coins.

To sell the mastic for a long period in advance, it's a very good and usual practice, since we oblige the farmers to deliver to us a pre-defined quantity, without worrying on the weather conditions and the harvest. Of course, we have a problem, and if the mastic growers don't deliver the quantity we need. Thus, we urge them to buy from other farmers paying the double price. With this well-thought plan our commercial risks are eliminated, at least as far as it regards the farming, as for others, like war and piracy we are not protected.

*Pietro Recanelli, Mahona Shareholder, Vessa, 1360*

Medieval Mastic Village of Vessa by Yannis Zafeiris



[Watch in full screen](#)



PIOP Mastic Museum, Living Mastic Tree



4.1: A well thought plan, 1360



PIOP Mastic Museum Chios, Coats of Arms of the Giustiniani, the Mahona Shareholders



PIOP Mastic Museum Chios, Chios under the Genoese Rule



PIOP Mastic Museum, Historic Mastic Tree



## 4.2 The Wedding, 1454

Cultivating these trees, which are low in height it means that you spend your life bending... Each year we prune them, so as to allow them receive light as much as possible. Then the men cut the tree trunk to allow the mastic tears come out of the tree trunk and the big branches. You see mastic is not a fruit that you collect from a tree branch. It is well hidden in bark of the tree. But cutting the bark, is not easy and special skills are required for this. For if the bark is cut deeply, the tree is badly injured. And if only the surface is touched, we cannot gain the valuable tears.

Our work begins before the tree cutting. We must clear the earth around the tree trunk, uproot the weeds, pick up all stones and the most tiny ones, in order for the tears not to mix with them while falling onto the cleaned ground and then you must sift white earth on the cleaned earth around the tree trunk and stamp on it as long as it becomes smooth and steady. Thus, when the resin tears flow out of the bark, fall into a clean “table” and do not glue with impure elements. The preparation of the table is very important for a clean produce, to be then easily collected. After that we must wait for 15 days that the tears solidify. It must be collected with the first light. First we must collect the big pieces. Then the smaller ones, and lastly the smaller drops had fallen on the table. And then

- Medieval Mastic Village of Olympoi, Chios, Greece.



[Watch in full screen](#)





collect all the drops that are still on the tree trunk and the branches.

All the produce must be transferred to shady storage rooms before midday. Then we start to clean them. We remove earth and leaves, then we wash it and dry it. With small knives we clean every tear as small as it might be and every grain. And because these pieces are very small this procedure starts in the autumn and ends in the spring.

All my family is cultivating mastic, which is taken away from those lords immediately. Much joy in life we don't have, especially if we don't collect enough mastic tears, then life is getting harder and survival is the goal. Next week is my cousin's wedding. All weddings are celebrated in the building the lords have built for our ceremonies. It is built on the ground, without windows, with three pillars supporting the vaults. All tables and seats are also built in. But even if it had windows, we would not be able to enjoy the view. The village is built like a prison; all houses are the same, the alleys without pattern and very narrow, no trees, no free spaces, just endless stone walls and a huge tower in the middle, where the guards keep the money and the mastic.

*Anastasia, Masticaria from Olympos, 1454*



PIOP Mastic Museum, Chios,  
mastic collection stages: from  
the earth to the cleansed tears



## 4.3 The Investement, 1455

To look after one's commercial interest is not easy at all, because each interest is conflicting with another one. Chios is one of our biggest investment and we must ensure both the capital and profits. In this spirit we decided to act as wholesalers, in order to avoid any further risks. We contract individuals and companies who sell the product in the lands of the Pope and the Emperor, in Cyprus, Rhodes, Syria, Egypt, Smyrna, Romania, Constantinople, Crimea, to the kings of France and England to say the least. The re-sellers are taking the own risks. Usually they pay us with foreign exchange in Cyprus and in Genoa. In addition to foreign exchange, bonds, checks, bills, back-checks are also used, and checking and current accounts are maintained.

More or less we collect about 30.000 golden ducats from the mastic trade every year, Maona, our company, is the only wholesaler. The quantity is strictly regulated, so that the price is kept high. In the case of surplus, either we use it to balance the shortfalls or burn it to keep the price high. The control and limitation of production also serves to keep the mastic trees from being exhausted.

*Leonardo di Cornasca, Mahona Shareholder, Kalamoti 1455*



PIOP Mastic  
Museum Chios,  
Valuable Mastic

- Medieval Mastic village of Kalamoti  
by K. Anagnostou



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## 4.4 Scent of Freedom, 1518

In the year of our Lord 1518 I have installed myself in the deserted Monastery of St. Giorgio Sykoussi. Little by little I have reinstated some buildings; I built houses and even a tower like the Giustiniani did, so that the entrance to the Monastery is the entrance of the village. It made it tall with an arch on the top of which I put a Cross. So, whoever wished to enter the village had to pass under this arch, meaning, that nobody could do that mounted on a horse. He had to enter on foot and cross himself .

But I did not call monks to support me. I called the farmers from Lithi, from Avgonyma and Pyrgi, who started to cultivate the lands of the Monastery. I don't know how the Latins let me do, but they did not interfere. May be because the lands belonged to the Orthodox Church.

Ahh, gone are the glorious days, when we were masters of ourselves, protected by the Emperor in Constantinople. Gone are the days where we had anything to say.

Still we built a community here. We share everything, help and respect each other. And the land rewards the labour of the farmers, who act in the love of God.

*Sofronios, Abbot of St. George Sykoussis, 1518*



The Medieval Mastic Village of St. George Sikoussi, past and present day by N. Kilis



The Church of Saint George Sikoussi, overview



The Church of Saint George Sikoussi with bell tower by G. Stefanias

The Church of Saint George Sikoussi by G. Stefanias



The Church of Saint George Sikoussi with iconostasis by G. Stefanias



The Medieval Mastic Village of St. George Sikoussi, 1937 by P. A. Mavrogiorgis





# 5 Adventure, 1492



## Introduction

The period 1450 -1500 the Giustiniani were at the zenith of their commercial prosperity and wealth, having nearly the whole of the carrying trade of the Levant in their hands. At this time the island is said to have had a population of no less than 100,000, all engaged in trading with Asia Minor and Europe. However, the rule of these crusader merchants was despotic and cruel for the mastic growers. Harsh penalties were inflicted for the smallest offense like the nose an ear cutting and public flagellations where sufferers had to pay six denaria a stroke, as a fee to the man who scourged them. No citizen could sell anything



Banca di San Giorgio, Genova by History Crunch



The Last Siege, French miniature by Jean Le Tavernier sometime after 1455



eatable except at the price regulated by the archons; no one could leave the island without the special permission.

In this period two major events shook the world: the conquest of Constantinople in 1453 by the Ottoman Turks, which excluded the Italian maritime republics and European merchants from free trade with the East. Europe is looking for alternatives and the voyages of Columbus to America in 1492, gave birth to the European Discovery Age with many more explorers like Vasco da Gama, Ferdinand Magellan and Captain James Cook.



Portrait of Christopher Columbus by Sebastiano del Piombo, 1519, the MET Online Collection



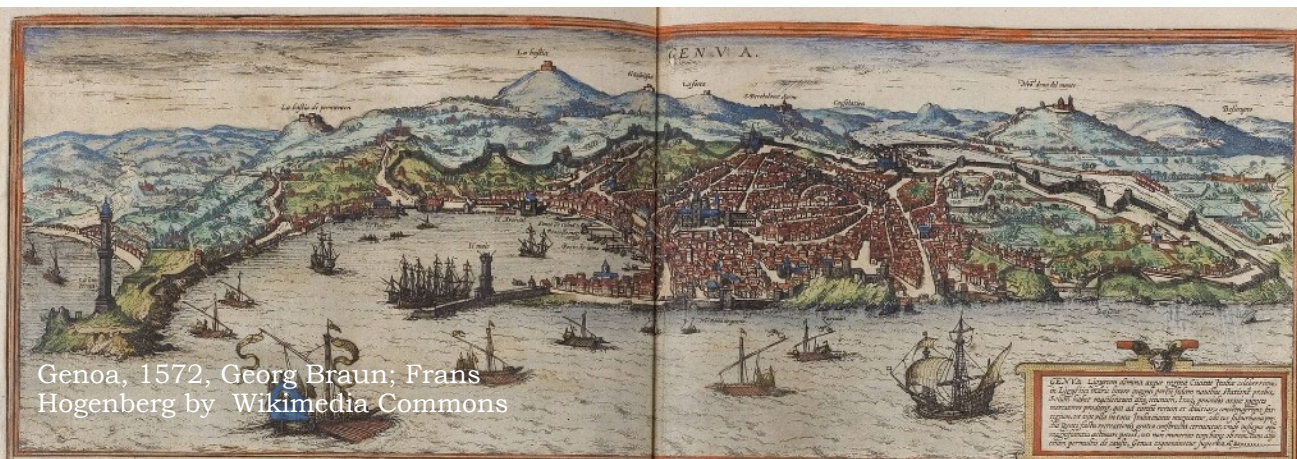
Gentile Bellini - The Yorck Project (2002) 10.000 Meisterwerke der Malerei (DVD-ROM), distributed by DIRECTMEDIA Publishing GmbH. ISBN: 3936122202.



- 1492: Conquest of Paradise



[Watch in full screen](#)



Genoa, 1572, Georg Braun; Frans Hogenberg by Wikimedia Commons



## 5.1 Citizenship, 1475

These Genoese merchants spread the word that they have come here to save the local nobility of Chios! Indeed, this is the word they spread everywhere: that they love and respect us and protect us from any danger. Bluntly I am saying that what they love is hidden in their pockets. And it never crosses their minds to consider us their equals. That the son of the foxy admiral Fulco Zaccaria married the sister of our Emperor, this means nothing for us! Not only that Emperor Michael handed the lands of Phocaea by his golden seal to those despicable heretics for nothing, - in exchange for their assistant to recapture our capital. Did they help? Of course not! These are merchant souls. Crusader merchants, I should say. And not only is the island of Chios lost to us natives, but also Phocaea and its alum mines are gone to them as a privilege and monopoly. Outrageous, isn't it? But why to stick to one monopoly, if you can have the others too? And there he comes, the admiral Benedetto Zaccaria with his fleet to "save" Chios from the Turks. It is his "duty" as the son in law of the Emperor. An Empire without a navy by the way... And now they do not miss a chance to sell the products everywhere, because what is the use of the monopoly, if you cannot sell?

- Medieval Mastic Village of Pyrgi by K. Anagnostou



[Watch in full screen](#)

- The 500-year-old mystery of Christopher Columbus - BBC REEL



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Medieval Mastic Village of Pyrgi with Central Watch Tower

And they sell all over the word.  
Toothpaste for the Kings in  
Europe, medicine for the German  
Emperor, mastic for the Sultan's  
harem, cures and treatments,  
mastic oil and ointments, mastic  
as ingredient for food. Anything  
that the heart wishes has been  
made saleable by those Lords.  
And we, the locals, sit here and  
watch how we are exploited. And  
for consolation we have been  
granted Genoese citizenship!

*Nicola Cybo, Land owner, Chios*



Medieval Mastic Village of Pyrgi, overview of the fortified settlement  
by K. Anagnostou



Medieval Mastic Village of Pyrgi, central square with main church  
of Holy Apostles by K. Anagnostou



## 5.2 Tree cutting, 1480

The work begins before the tree cutting. We must clear the earth around the tree trunk, uproot the weeds, pick up all stones and the most tiny ones, in order for the tears not to mix with them while falling onto the cleaned ground and then you must sift white earth on the cleaned earth around the tree trunk and stamp on it as long as it becomes smooth and steady. Thus, when the resin tears flow out of the bark, fall into a clean “table” and do not glue with impure elements. The preparation of the table is very important for a clean produce, to be then easily collected.

- Mastic Cleaning by K. Anagnostou



[Watch in full screen](#)



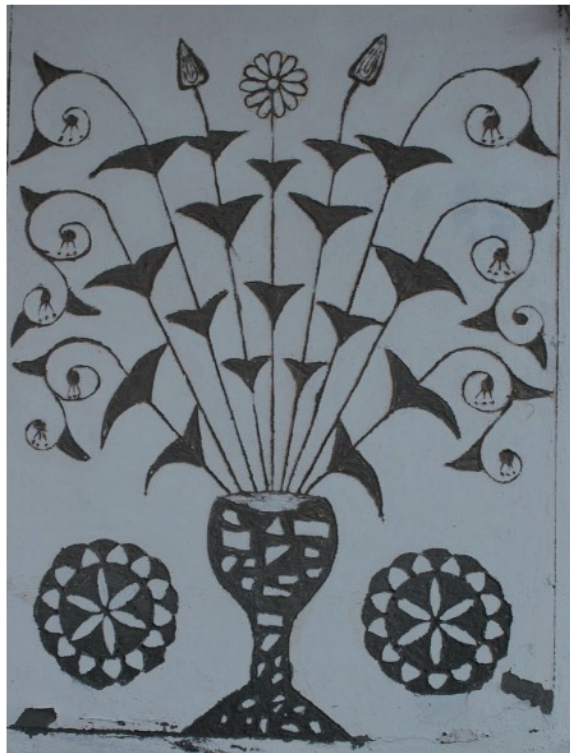
Medieval Mastic Village of Pyrgi, architectural details sgraffiti by K. Anagnostou



After that we must wait for 15 days that the tears solidify. It must be collected with the first light. First, we must collect the big pieces. Then the smaller ones, and lastly the smaller drops fallen on the table. And then collect all the drops that are still on the tree trunk and the branches.

All the produce must be transferred to shady storage rooms before midday. Then we start to clean it. We remove earth and leaves, then we wash it and dry it. With small knives we clean every tear as small as it might be and every grain. And because these pieces are very small this procedure starts in the autumn and ends in the spring.

*Katingo, Mastic Cleaner, Pyrgi*



Medieval Mastic  
Village of Pyrgi,  
architectural details  
sgraffiti by K.  
Anagnostou





## 5.4 Brave New World, 1492

I am a native of Mesta, but I am not a mastic grower. You see, my passion for the sea, was too big to allow me to shut my life among the walls of the fortified village. My father sent me to a relative who was living in the suburbs of the City of Chios outside of the Castle, and from there the path towards my vocation was short. I started as a mariner in the merchant ships of La Superba, the Republic of Genoa and now I am a proud captain of a commercial galley. You see the captain of a merchant ship has little difference from the captain of a warship. For us, enemies and pirates are exactly the same. You sail from one port knowing your allies, until you arrive to the next port, they have become enemies and they attack your ship. And apart from them, there are always the pirates to give you hard times.

Some hundred years ago, under the Lord Benedetto Zaccaria, who married the sister of the Emperor of the Romans, Michael Palaiologos, the island of Chios grew very wealthy. Not only because Chios is having the monopoly of mastic and several others, but also because it lies in the middle of all important commercial cross roads. It is the best stopover between Constantinople and Alexandria and the central ring in the chain Cyprus-Chios-Constantinople-Caffa, the colony of the Genoese in the Black Sea. From there I sailed many times to Trabzon and the Azof Sea and to Tauris, the final destination for the caravans from Asia carrying the silks and the spices.

- Medieval Mastic Village of Pyrgi, Greece. Stucco Technique of the Façade by Milero.



[Watch in full screen](#)





From Kaffa I have often transported alum to Europe. But I have to say that the best quality of alum arrives from the mines in Phocaea, which by imperial decree were given to Genoa. Ahh, how we resent this turn of fate... When Emperor Michael recaptured Constantinople from the Latins without any help, he kept his promise to Genoa and surrendered the promised lands to La Superba, as these overlords call their Republic. Chios was one of these territories, which passed over to them with that shameful treaty two hundred years ago.

The alum is the most desired product that is linked to health, it is the only medicine that cleans the wounds and prevents the wound infection. It is used for all the wounds and also for internal diseases, for the stomach and the lungs and the throat and it is proven that many have been saved from internal bleeding from taking this drug. Also this miraculous substance when it comes to contact with the colors that is dying the yarns and fabrics it stabilizes the colors and many manufacturers and cloth merchant became rich from its use, let alone that it is an indispensable material for tanning, because of its ability to disinfect animal materials sterile. And such great value in commerce that make the transport with heavily armed men, as you don't know who you will meet on the sea road. As a captain carrying such a rare load, I have to admit that the Genoese

- Medieval Mastic Village of Pyrgi by K. Anagnostou



[Watch in full screen](#)





know how to protect its transfer with heavy ships and armed men on board.

My first voyage sent me from Chios to England, where we brought alum from Focaea and wine from Chios. An Englishman on board was bringing the alum to the court of the King of England, two years ago he was sent to Chios as a buyer of many goods, silks, mastic and alum at the most. I sailed many times to Cyprus, Syria and Egypt to get valuable merchandise like spices and gold which come from Africa and Asia. All the merchandise comes to the port of Genoa and from there our merchants and agents distribute to the lands of the Pope and the German Emperor, to the King of France and England and the kings of the northern territories. This I can say with certainty: Chios is the central ring in the chain that connects the East and the West. From Chios, a cosmopolitan place with mild climate and rich gifts from nature, I sailed many times to Majorca and Cadiz, Sicily, Valencia, Malaga, Tunis, Ancona, Buzea, Brugges, London, Armenia and Flanders, Oran, Tortosa and Naples.

In 1491, having arrived from a tiring journey to Chios, I heard rumors about a Genoese captain who just came to our island looking for experienced mariners. Asking here and there in the port, I heard some rumors that he is starting an adventure to sail to Indies following the west direction. Some of us think that he is an imposter and some think of him as a daring

- Christopher Columbus remaking the adventure by Clark's History Reels



[Watch in full screen](#)

man. Maybe the admiral is right and following a direction to the west we can find another road to the luxury items that Europe craves for. For 40 years now, after the fall of Constantinople to the Turks, their sultans closed all roads to Europeans travelling to the east. So, they started looking for alternatives. I heard of new navigation tools and funding from the most Catholic kings in Spain. If this is true, I have nothing to lose and enroll myself to Colombo's fleet.



Since the fall of Constantinople frequent letters of distress from the Chian merchants arrive to the Signorial in Genova, and appeals for a united attack on the Turks. I still remember in 1477, that Genoa sent a fleet of four ships to Chios, on a report being spread that the Turks were preparing to descend on the island; but on reaching Chios it was discovered that the Turkish armament had another destination, and the expedition returned home without doing anything. Rumors say that captain Columbo, then a boy, took part in this expedition.

In the mean time I heard that some native mariners enrolled already and will sail to Genova and from there to Spain and then to the ocean until they find land. I will try my luck, as experience is a great advantage for selecting the crew. I hear that captain Colombo is recruiting from all over the places in the island. He is supposed to be in Pyrgi right now, the biggest of the mastic villages, residing in the corner house opposite the Church. I heard that he was impressed by the cultivation of mastic and sent a letter to Queen Isabella in Spain about this. People say a lot of things and I need to find out what is of substance and what is rubbish. So, I will knock on his door to know more, that is the best solution. Thank God, I know every stone in this island, which is as big as the world in fame and capacity. Avanti!

*Capitano Michail Mestoussis, Pyrgi*







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